

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

11C-155

Mt. Toby

E

AMH.

Town/City: Amherst

Place: Amherst Center

Address: 15 Beston Street

Historic Name: The Tillson House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: 1909 (on Tillson Court)

Source: tax records

Style/Form: New Englander Farmhouse

Architect/Builder:

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete cinder blocks

Wall/Trim: clapboard

Roof: asphalt

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: A 2016 "small" or "tiny house" is located at the end of the driveway on the house's north side.

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Condition: good

Moved: no yes ☐ **Date:** July 1967

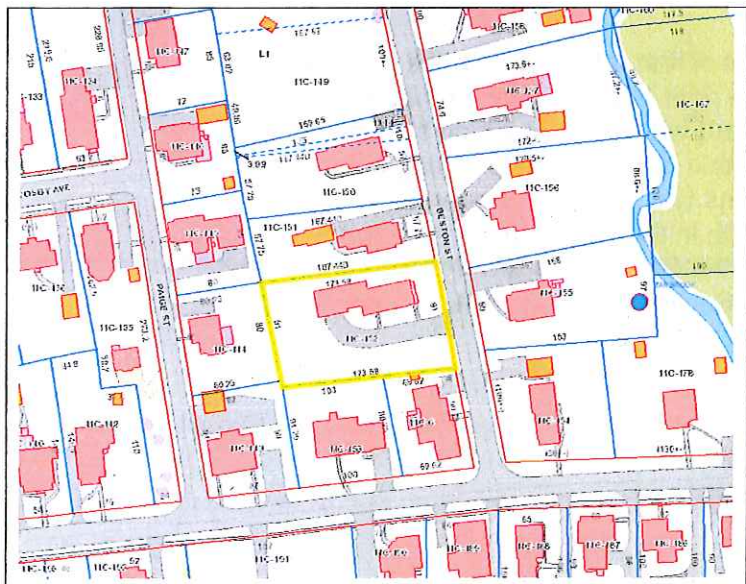
Acreage: 0.33 acres

Setting: rural college town

Photograph



Locus Map



Recorded by: E. Gouin, M. Adams, E. Wilfert

Organization: LSHD

Date (*month / year*): September 2016

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AMHERST

15 BESTON ST

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.*If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

Two-and-half story gable-ended house. Features a double front door, even though the house was originally a single family dwelling. These doors are recessed into a small porch area to the right of the front façade. The house façade has two front windows to the left of the recessed double front-door which features an open portico with a small pediment over the doorway area. Prior to its single-family occupancy in 1990 when purchased by Grace Griecci and Peter Woodsum, this house (by neighbor's observation and report) was a non-owner occupied two or three family rental. The right-hand second front door led to a stairwell to a separate upstairs dwelling. There was an exterior stairwell from the upper floor. Fenestration includes two standard sash windows on the ground floor, two more windows on the second floor, and a single window in the gable. All windows are the same size and type. There is a side entrance deck to the north.

In 2016, the owners built a separate "small house" at the end of the driveway to the north (left) of the main house.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Erwin W. and Helen A. Pettyjohn (African Americans associated with 44 Beston) in 1950 (1072/58) bought this southerly parcel of a larger lot from Jennie Neenan, who had inherited the entire parcel from Marcella Ward (see Historical Narrative for 17 Beston). Eight years later, they acquired the northerly parcel as well, 17 Beston Street, from Jeremiah Neenan (also known as Jerry Ward) (1958) (1266/107). (See Historical Narrative for 17 Beston.) According to the 1950 Amherst Directory, Erwin W. and his wife Helen A. Pettyjohn were living with Helen's mother, Bessie Pettijohn Bias, at 44 Beston (see 44 Beston Historical Narrative) and Erwin is listed as proprietor of General Roofing Co. at 44 Beston.

The southerly section of the Neenan property (now 15 Beston) had no house until July 1967, when Erwin Pettyjohn moved a house built in 1909, very much in the New Englander vernacular farmhouse style of #14, 20, and 26 Beston (except that the front door and stairwell were to the right, not the left of the house). The house was built by David H. Tillson, who lived on E. Pleasant St

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when what became Tillson Court was developed, where he built and rented out the houses behind, later #12 and 16, to two families. Tillson started out as a farmer (1895 Amherst Directory) but became Deputy Sheriff with his own house at East Pleasant and a phone at Paige's livery stable. He built his first rental house in 1903, the second by 1906, and the third by 1910 (Tax Assessments).

The house that was by 1967 moved to Beston St had been bought by the Reed family in 1940, after years of rental. That house, referred to as house #3 in the Tax Valuations, first appears in 1910 so was likely built during 1909.

Tillson Court was located in the area south of Triangle St and fronting the east side of East Pleasant that was in commercial transition during the 1960s: the Amherst Carriage Motor Inn was built between 1964-66, the Amherst Laundry closed between 1962-4 (Amherst Directories). George Reed, who had rented and then bought the house in question, managed the laundry that closed. It was a good time to sell the house to Erwin Pettyjohn and let him move the house from 16 Tillson Court to 15 Beston Street. The photograph showing the house-moving is in Jones Library Special Collections and appears below. Paul Britt, Sr., whose family lived at 35 McClellan (he now lives at 43 McClellan), remembers the Pettyjohns moving the house across their Britt backyard over the objections of Britt's mother, to save costs of dismantling electric wires at the corner of McClellan and Beston. Both 35 and 43 McClellan had back yards opening to the lot that became 15 Beston and that now has a garden wall surrounding it.

The Pettyjohns sold 15 Beston to John F. Edwards in 1987 (3012/38) and it became a non-owner-occupied two family rental. Grace Griecci and Peter Woodsum purchased the property in 3/01/1990, turned it back into a single-family dwelling, and for some years Grace Griecci ran a day-care center from the house.

This house, like the others on the east side of Beston Street, is bounded to the east by Tan Brook, a year-round stream (officially designated "intermittent

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stream" at this address and others to its south). Tan Brook flows through this and twelve other properties and borders five others between McClellan Street and UMass, including lots on North Pleasant Street, Beston Street, Fearing Street and Nutting Avenue, as well as wooded lots west of North Pleasant Street. Its name derives from the tanneries which had flanked the stream during the early 19th century in the area that now part of Kendrick Park and where Tan Brook is piped underground. The brook's sources lie to the north and east, and were piped underground in the 20th century, through the school grounds between Strong and Triangle Streets, beneath the East Pleasant Street commercial district, continuing under Kendrick Park and along McClellan Street.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES Ed Wilfert, Maurianne Adams

Property Assessment Records for 11C/155.

Tax Valuations.

Amherst Directories .

Jones Library Special Collections manuscript collections

Neighbor's personal and family memories